



Revisiting Fitness Service Quality: Work Competence and Customer Satisfaction in Selected Sports and Fitness Centers in Cebu City

Xue Jun Qi

Guangzhou Institute of Science and Technology, Guangzhou, Guangdong, China

Email: hschen98.tw@gmail.com

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Abstract— This article revisits and reanalyzes survey data originally collected for a 2013 doctoral dissertation on work competence and customer satisfaction in selected sports and fitness centers in Cebu City, Philippines. The purpose is not to describe the current state of the fitness industry, but to extract management implications from a legacy dataset and to place the findings in dialogue with recent research on fitness service quality, customer experience, and sport management competencies. A mixed-method approach combining quantitative and qualitative procedures was used to analyze data from 23 professionals and 35 customers across five fitness centers and sport clubs. Work competence was examined through core competencies and service quality, while customer satisfaction was assessed through quality of personnel, programs, and facilities. Results showed that both professionals and customers rated work competence as very good, and customers reported a very satisfied overall level of satisfaction. No significant relationships were found between demographic profiles and work competence or satisfaction. However, customers' perceived work competence was positively associated with customer satisfaction. The difference between professionals' self-assessment and customers' evaluation of work competence was not statistically significant. The findings suggest that professional competence, communication, service responsiveness, program assessment, and customer-centered service design remain important managerial priorities for fitness service organizations.

Keywords— core competencies, customer satisfaction, service quality, sports and fitness centers, work competence.

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Rationale of the Study

Service organizations depend on the joint performance of employee-related and customer-related variables. In sport and fitness services, customer experience is shaped not only by facilities and programs, but also by the competence, responsiveness, communication, and professional conduct of customer-contact employees. As competition in fitness services intensifies, organizations must develop professional staff capabilities while continuously improving perceived service quality and customer satisfaction. This article

therefore reexamines a legacy dataset on sports and fitness centers in Cebu City and interprets it through contemporary discussions of fitness service quality, customer experience, and sport management competencies.

Sport and fitness organizations are service-oriented [1]. Their services are intangible, perishable, heterogeneous, and usually produced and consumed simultaneously. In fitness centers, these characteristics appear concretely in instructor-client interaction, exercise program design, equipment safety, facility cleanliness, scheduling assistance, and responsiveness to complaints. Recent research on

health-fitness clubs and sport fitness centers indicates that personnel interaction, physical environment, program quality, equipment quality, and service responsiveness are central dimensions of customer satisfaction and loyalty [2-4].

In the sport management literature, the relationship between employee competence and customer outcomes has received renewed attention. Recent fitness-service studies have shown that instructors' interaction quality, service environment, perceived quality, and trust are associated with satisfaction and behavioral intentions [5,6]. These findings support the need to examine employee-related variables and customer-related variables within the same service setting.

Sport management research has traditionally examined coaches, athletes, administrators, and organizational leadership. However, fitness centers constitute an important service setting because they combine professional guidance, program delivery, facility management, and membership-based consumption. Although the empirical data used in this article were collected in 2013, the topic remains relevant. Recent global industry reporting shows continued post-pandemic growth in fitness participation, facilities, and revenue, while Philippine fitness-center research has also highlighted changing consumer preferences and service expectations [7,8]. Accordingly, the present study should be read as a retrospective empirical analysis of professional competence and customer satisfaction, rather than as a description of the current fitness market in Cebu City.

This study contributes to sport service management by linking professional work competence, perceived service quality, and customer satisfaction within the fitness-center context. It also provides a basis for reinterpreting earlier field data through more recent research on service quality, customer experience, and sport management competencies.

1.2 Theoretical Background

The business literature contains numerous managerial models implemented by successful organizations. One influential framework is the balanced scorecard, which was originally proposed as a performance measurement framework and

subsequently developed into a strategic management system [9-11]. The framework emphasizes that organizational performance should not be evaluated solely through financial outcomes, but also through customer, internal process, and learning-and-growth perspectives. Two key principles underlie the success of for-profit organizations. First, for long-term prosperity, the expectations of shareholders, customers, and employees need to be satisfied. Second, these three stakeholders are interrelated: employee attitudes and behaviors affect customer satisfaction and retention; customer attitudes and behaviors influence shareholder satisfaction and retention; and shareholder satisfaction may affect employee satisfaction through bonuses, stock options, or investment in employee growth and development.

A related management framework is the employee-customer-profit chain model developed in Sears' management practice and systematically discussed by Rucci, Kirn, and Quinn [12]. The model is organized around the three Cs: a compelling place to work, a compelling place to shop, and a compelling place to invest. It emphasizes a sequential linkage among employee attitudes and behaviors, customer satisfaction and retention, and financial performance. Yeung and Berman further quantified this linkage by reporting that a 5% improvement in associate behaviors was associated with a 1.3% increase in customer retention, a 1.04% increase in revenues, and a 0.4% increase in profit [13].

The application of systems theory allows management to approach organizational activities from a systemic perspective, enhancing sensitivity to all aspects that affect organizational life. Through a systems theory approach, management would be more alert and responsive to contextual factors and the interdependence of constituent components, making decisions based on culture and structure and assessing changes within the concept of goodness-of-fit.

Perceived service quality is the consumer's judgment about an entity's overall excellence or superiority. Delivering quality service is a crucial strategy for service organizations. The SERVQUAL tradition conceptualizes service quality through tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy [14]. In fitness centers, these dimensions are

reflected in personnel interaction, equipment condition, program delivery, facility environment, and the ability to respond to customer needs.

Perceived quality is distinguished from objective quality. Several scholars suggest that quality is a form of overall evaluation of a product, similar to attitudes, and is “the degree of discrepancy between consumers’ perceptions and expectations”. In the satisfaction literature, expectations are viewed as predictions about what is likely to happen; in service quality literature, expectations are viewed as desires or wants—what a service provider should offer rather than would offer.

A number of service dimensions have been identified in the marketing literature. Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry initially identified ten determinants of service quality: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, communication, credibility, security, competence, courtesy, understanding/knowing the customer, and access [15]. In a later scale-development study, these determinants were refined into the five SERVQUAL dimensions—tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy—forming the basis of a 22-item instrument for measuring consumers’ perceptions of service quality [14]. The measure rests on the suggestion that service quality should be represented as the gap between service expectations and actual service performance, also known as the disconfirmation paradigm. Accordingly, service quality is sufficient when customer perceptions equal or exceed the expected level. Other researchers have argued that performance perceptions alone predict behavioral intentions at least as well as the complete model, suggesting the use of performance-only perceptions as a measure of service quality.

Service climate research suggests that employees’ treatment by the organization is reflected in their service behavior toward customers. In fitness centers, this implies that staff training, supervisory support, and internal service culture may influence how customers perceive service quality during direct encounters.

Competencies refer to the knowledge, skills, abilities, behaviors, and personal characteristics that enable employees to perform critical work tasks effectively. Early competency theory emphasized the

predictive value of individual characteristics for job performance, while recent sport management research has developed this idea into an integrated construct involving professional knowledge, communication, leadership, service orientation, adaptability, and lifelong learning [16-18]. In fitness service settings, competence is therefore not limited to technical exercise knowledge; it also includes the ability to communicate, respond to customer needs, manage service encounters, and support safe and effective program participation.

A competency model identifies the competencies needed for a specific role or occupation. In sport and fitness services, contemporary competency frameworks emphasize knowledge, skills, professional behavior, communication, leadership, and industry-specific capabilities [16-18]. Such a model can support staff selection, training, evaluation, and continuing professional development.

Recent sport management competency research indicates that core competencies include knowledge, skills, abilities, communication, leadership, service orientation, and adaptive capacity [16,17]. Foundational competencies may include reading, writing, computation, listening, speaking, cognitive abilities, interpersonal skills, and information technology skills. In the fitness industry, these competencies are expressed through safe instruction, program explanation, customer communication, complaint response, and the ability to match service delivery to customer needs.

Competencies are context-specific. Their required level differs by role, service setting, and customer-contact intensity. In fitness centers, competency assessment should therefore focus on observable service behaviors, technical instruction, communication, safety awareness, and the ability to adapt programs to customer needs.

Job performance is a central factor in employee management, associated with the ability to realize work goals, fulfill expectations, and attain standards set by the organization. In fitness centers, job performance involves both task execution and service encounter quality. It includes technical instruction, safety supervision, customer communication, program arrangement, and the capacity to respond to

unexpected conditions. Recent sport management literature further suggests that the alignment between industry requirements and professional preparation is essential for improving service performance [16-18].

Role clarity and competency development are important for effective job performance. Employees who understand their responsibilities and possess the required skills are more likely to deliver stable service quality. In fitness services, this includes technical instruction, safety supervision, program arrangement, customer communication, and timely responses to unexpected service conditions.

From the customer's perspective, service encounters are affected by both cognitive evaluation and emotional response. Customers often interpret the quality of a service through the attitudes, tone, attention, and responsiveness displayed by frontline employees.

Despite the fact that service quality has been the most popular area of research in services marketing, it has only recently gained sport management scholars' attention. Numerous efforts have been made in sport/fitness fields to study service quality, including the development and examination of several measurement models. However, because of its conceptual complexity, the sport management literature, like the business literature, has not agreed upon one scale to measure service quality.

Customer satisfaction is the consumer's fulfillment response, reflecting whether a product or service provides a pleasurable level of consumption-related fulfillment. In fitness services, satisfaction is shaped by perceived service quality, program relevance, instructor competence, facility conditions, perceived value, and the customer's emotional experience during service encounters. Recent studies in fitness centers show that customer experience quality, perceived quality, perceived value, trust, and service environment are closely associated with satisfaction and loyalty [2,3,19,20].

Customer satisfaction is also shaped by perceived value. When customers believe that personnel quality, program relevance, facility conditions, and price are balanced, they are more likely to evaluate the service favorably. Recent fitness-service studies similarly associate perceived

quality and value with satisfaction and behavioral intention [2,3,19,20]. For fitness managers, this means that satisfaction should be understood as the result of an integrated service system rather than a single facility or program attribute.

The Expectancy Disconfirmation Model remains a dominant explanation for customer satisfaction. Customers form expectations before using a service and compare those expectations with perceived performance. Satisfaction increases when performance meets or exceeds expectations, whereas dissatisfaction occurs when performance falls below the expected level [21]. In fitness centers, expectations may relate to staff competence, program effectiveness, facility cleanliness, equipment safety, and service responsiveness. Therefore, satisfaction depends on both the functional outcome of exercise services and the customer's subjective comparison between expected and actual service performance.

Dissatisfaction also deserves attention because many dissatisfied customers do not formally complain. A low number of complaints therefore cannot be interpreted as strong evidence of customer goodwill or service quality.

Customer loyalty contributes to organizational sustainability by supporting retention, repeat purchase, more predictable revenue, and lower marketing costs. For fitness centers, loyalty depends not only on facilities, but also on program quality and the quality of human interaction.

In sport and fitness services, customer satisfaction has been linked to facility conditions, personnel quality, program relevance, service promptness, and perceived value. These factors are particularly important because fitness centers combine professional guidance, facility use, and membership-based consumption. Customers usually evaluate not only the core exercise program, but also the surrounding service process, including reception, scheduling, instruction, equipment availability, and problem handling. Thus, service quality in fitness centers should be treated as a multidimensional managerial issue rather than a purely technical exercise-delivery issue.

Interactions between service employees and customers are central to customers' assessments of quality. Because fitness services require direct and

repeated contact, the employee's communication style, emotional control, and professional conduct can shape the customer's service experience.

Employees' attitudes and behaviors may positively or negatively affect customers' perceptions of service quality. Friendliness, attentiveness, confidence, and responsiveness can strengthen customer evaluations, whereas role stress, low motivation, or poor service recovery may weaken them.

In most service settings, direct employee-customer interaction functions as a critical moment of service evaluation. Emotionally competent staff are more likely to maintain a constructive service atmosphere, respond to customer needs, and manage difficult service situations effectively. In the fitness context, such competence is particularly relevant because clients may require encouragement, safety guidance, correction of movement errors, and reassurance during physical activity. These interpersonal behaviors can strengthen trust and support a more positive evaluation of the overall service experience.

Employee and customer affect may influence each other during service encounters. Positive emotional displays by staff can support a more favorable customer experience, while customers' responses may also feed back into employees' service behavior.

Customer positive affect may contribute to favorable service evaluations, especially when the service is intangible and depends on interpersonal interaction. In this study, perceived service quality is treated as a proximal evaluation, while customer satisfaction is treated as a broader outcome of the service experience. This distinction is important because service encounters may influence immediate perceptions of quality, whereas satisfaction reflects the customer's more comprehensive judgment of personnel, programs, and facilities. Accordingly, the present study examines association rather than causation between work competence and customer satisfaction.

In sum, the literature suggests that customer satisfaction is related to organizational sustainability, retention, and customer loyalty. However, because the present study uses a descriptive-correlational

design and cross-sectional survey data, it does not test causality. Rather, it examines the association between professionals' work competence and customers' satisfaction in selected sports and fitness centers.

1.3 Research Objectives and Questions

1.3.1 Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions, which were consolidated to fit a journal-article structure and to avoid reproducing the full dissertation-style problem statement:

Accordingly, this article addresses three research questions:

RQ1. What are the demographic profiles of the sports and fitness professionals and customers, and what are the observed levels of work competence and customer satisfaction?

RQ2. Are the profile characteristics of professionals and customers significantly related to work competence and customer satisfaction, respectively?

RQ3. Is customers' perceived work competence significantly associated with customer satisfaction, and is there a significant difference between professionals' self-assessment and customers' evaluation of work competence?

1.3.2 Hypotheses

The null hypotheses tested in this study are: Ho1. There is no significant relationship between the profile of professionals and level of work competence, between the profile of customers and level of satisfaction, or between perceived work competence and customer satisfaction. Ho2. There is no significant difference in the perceived level of work competence between professionals and customers.

1.4 Contributions of the Study

This article offers three contributions. First, it reexamines a legacy dataset from Cebu City through contemporary research on fitness service quality, customer experience, and sport management competencies. Second, it provides empirical evidence on the relationship between perceived professional competence and customer satisfaction in a developing Asian urban fitness-service context.

Third, it translates the findings into practical implications for professional training, service responsiveness, program assessment, and customer-centered service design.

1.5 Research Methodology

1.5.1 Research Design

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative data gathering approaches. The raw data gathered were both qualitative and quantitative, consisting of respondents' perceptions of employees' behavior and their degree of satisfaction in various sport and fitness industries in Cebu City, Philippines.

1.5.2 Research Environment

The study was conducted in five anonymized sports and fitness centers in Cebu City, Philippines. To avoid over-identification of specific organizations and to reflect the retrospective nature of the dataset, the participating sites are treated as Center A to Center E. The centers differed in size, service scope, and membership base, but all provided customer-facing sport or fitness services. The study focused on customer-contact professionals and exiting customers during the survey period.

1.5.3 Research Respondents

The respondents were those present in the centers during the study duration. They were given survey questionnaires to answer upon exiting the center. Distribution of respondents was determined after the survey. Table 1 shows the distribution.

Table 1 Distribution of Respondents

Fitness Center/Sport Club	Professionals		Customers		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Center A	6	26.09	5	14.29	11	18.97
Center B	3	13.04	7	20.00	10	17.24
Center C	4	17.39	6	17.14	10	17.24
Center D	6	26.09	9	25.71	15	25.86
Center E	4	17.39	8	22.86	12	20.69
Total	23	100.00	35	100.00	58	100.00

1.5.4 Research Instruments

The main data collection tools were survey questionnaires and an interview guide. The researcher-made questionnaire was formulated based on theories and empirical findings related to human resource management, service quality, and sport and fitness organizations. The questionnaire included three components: respondent profile, perceived work competence/service quality, and customer satisfaction. Higher scores indicated more favorable evaluations of professional competence and satisfaction.

Content validity was established through expert review. After the questionnaire was constructed, it was examined by experts in Exercise and Sports Science, and their recommendations were incorporated before finalization. Reliability was examined through a test-retest pilot study with 10

systematically selected clients. The reliability coefficient was 0.6473, which may be considered acceptable for exploratory field research but limited. Accordingly, the measurement results should be interpreted with caution and should not be overstated as evidence of strong psychometric reliability.

1.6 Research Procedures

1.6.1 Data Gathering

After the survey questionnaire was reviewed and finalized, convenience sampling was used to recruit respondents from the participating centers. Transmittals and communications were sent to the relevant organizations and academic office. Customers were invited to answer the questionnaire upon exiting the center, and completed questionnaires were encoded in MS Excel for subsequent analysis. At the time of data collection,

formal institutional ethics review was not required for this type of non-invasive survey research; nevertheless, voluntary participation, informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality were maintained.

1.6.2 Treatment of Data

Data obtained from the surveys were encoded in MS Excel and analyzed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, and weighted mean, were used to summarize respondent profiles, work competence, and customer satisfaction. Chi-square tests were used to examine relationships between respondent profiles and the main outcome variables. Pearson's r was used to examine the association between customers' perceived work competence and satisfaction. An independent-samples t-test was used to compare professionals' self-assessment and customers' evaluation of work competence. Thematic content analysis was used for qualitative responses.

1.7 Definition of terms

The operationalization of the study variables is as follows:

Professionals are the coaches/experts and trainers in the various fitness centers/sport clubs. Customers are the members or clients of the various fitness centers/sport clubs.

Customer Satisfaction means the consumer's fulfillment response—a judgment that a product or service feature provided a pleasurable level of consumption-related fulfillment, including levels of under- or overfulfillment. This is measured by a 4-point Likert scale with various items; higher scores indicate higher satisfaction.

Work competence refers to the knowledge, skills, abilities, service behaviors, and professional execution required for effective work performance in sports and fitness centers. In this study, it is operationalized through core competencies and service quality indicators. Higher scores indicate more favorable perceptions of professional competence and service performance.

II. DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

This section presents the data gathered to address the research questions stated in Chapter 1. The data concern work competence and customer satisfaction in selected fitness and sport clubs in Cebu City.

2.1 Profile of the Professionals

Twenty-three professionals from five fitness centers and sport clubs participated. Their age, sex, civil status, length of experience, and average monthly income are shown in Table 2. Most were aged 20–29 years (56.52%), male (65.22%), single (60.87%), and had three years or less of professional experience. Over half (52.17%) earned less than P10,000 monthly.

Table 2 Profile of the Professionals in Fitness/Sport Centers/Clubs

Profile	Frequency	Percentage
AGE		
20 – 29	13	56.52
30 – 39	7	30.43
40 and up	3	13.05
Total	23	100.00
SEX		
Male	15	65.22
Female	8	34.78
Total	23	100.00
CIVIL STATUS		
Single	14	60.87
Married	7	30.43
Separated	2	8.70
Total	23	100.00
LENGTH OF EXPERIENCE		
Less than a year	5	21.74
1-3 years	11	47.83
4-5 years	3	13.05
More than 5 years	4	17.39
Total	23	100.00

AVERAGE MONTHLY INCOME		
Less than P10,000	12	52.17
P10,000-P15,000	7	30.43
More than P15,000-P20,000	3	13.05
More than P20,000	1	4.35
Total	23	100.00

2.2 Profile of the Customers

Thirty-five customers from the same five centers/clubs participated. Their profile is shown in Table 3. Most were aged 20–29 years (57.14%), male (68.57%), and single (51.43%). Regarding membership length, 37.14% had been members for less than six months and 34.29% for six months to one year. Daily usage was mostly between two and five hours (51.43%).

Table 3 Profile of the Customers in Fitness/Sport Centers/Clubs

Profile	Frequency	Percentage
AGE		
20 – 29	20	57.14
30 – 39	9	25.71
40 and up	6	17.14
Total	35	100.00
SEX		
Male	24	68.57
Female	11	31.43
Total	35	100.00
CIVIL STATUS		
Single	18	51.43
Married	12	34.29
Separated	5	14.29
Total	35	100.00
LENGTH OF MEMBERSHIP		
Less than 6 months	13	37.14
6 months-1 year	12	34.29

More than a year-3 years	7	20.00
More than 3 years	3	8.57
Total	35	100.00
AVERAGE DAILY USE		
Less than 2 hours	10	28.57
2-5 hours	18	51.43
More than 5 hours	7	20.00
Total	35	100.00

2.3 Level of Work Competence of the Sports and Fitness Professionals

Work competence was assessed through core competencies and service quality, from both professionals' self-assessments and customers' evaluations (Table 4). The professionals' overall mean is 3.45 ("very good"), while the customers' overall mean is 3.36 ("very good"). For core competencies, professionals rated themselves very good (mean = 3.40), with the highest scores on pride in job skills (3.68), expertise (3.56), professionalism (3.56), and product knowledge (3.56). They rated themselves only "good" on offering up-to-date information (3.25), possessing all necessary skills (3.20), and helping members schedule suitable learning conditions (3.02). In service quality, the professionals' mean is 3.50 ("very good"), led by willingness to communicate (3.75) and providing undivided attention (3.72). Customers perceived core competencies as very good overall (mean = 3.32), highlighting enthusiasm (3.62), pride in skills (3.56), and confidence (3.42). However, they rated handling problems (3.22), up-to-date information (3.09), possessing all skills (3.08), and scheduling help (3.00) only as "good". For service quality, the customer mean is 3.42 ("very good"), highest on communication willingness (3.68) and prompt service (3.60), while responding promptly to complaints was rated only "good" (3.15). These results suggest that professional confidence and service willingness were strengths, whereas updated information, individualized scheduling support, and complaint responsiveness were areas requiring

improvement. This interpretation is consistent with recent studies indicating that fitness instructors' technical, social, and communication skills contribute to customer trust and satisfaction [6], while sport

management competency research identifies communication, leadership, service orientation, and adaptive capacity as core professional capabilities [16,17].

Table 4 Professionals and Customers' Level of Work Competence

	Professionals		Customers	
	Mean	Description	Mean	Description
Core Competencies	3.40	Very good	3.32	Very good
1. Have confidence in their ability to do their job	3.54	Very good	3.42	Very good
2. There are some tasks required by their job that they cannot do well (N)	3.30	Very good	3.28	Very good
3. Have doubt in their ability to do their job (N)	3.45	Very good	3.28	Very good
4. Have all the skills needed to perform their job	3.20	Good	3.08	Good
5. Show expertise at their job	3.56	Very good	3.39	Very good
6. Are very proud of their job skills and abilities	3.68	Very good	3.56	Very good
7. Feel threatened when others watch them work (N)	3.31	Very good	3.36	Very good
8. Offer up-to-date information and teaching materials	3.25	Good	3.09	Good
9. Are professional and accomplished	3.56	Very good	3.40	Very good
10. Are enthusiastic	3.51	Very good	3.62	Very good
11. Are willing to help members to schedule suitable learning conditions (e.g. level and group)	3.02	Good	3.00	Good
12. Take prompt action in unexpected conditions	3.28	Very good	3.36	Very good
13. Handle any problems that arise	3.34	Very good	3.22	Good
14. Have knowledge of the products and their functions	3.56	Very good	3.41	Very good
Service Quality	3.50	Very good	3.42	Very good
1. Adequately complete assigned duties	3.45	Very good	3.32	Very good
2. Fulfill responsibilities specified in job description	3.33	Very good	3.28	Very good
3. Perform tasks that are expected of them	3.48	Very good	3.45	Very good
4. Meet formal performance requirements	3.33	Very good	3.30	Very good
5. Able to provide prompt service	3.54	Very good	3.60	Very good
6. Respond promptly to my complaints	3.27	Very good	3.15	Good
7. Do things right in a reasonable time	3.45	Very good	3.38	Very good
8. Provide undivided attention to club members	3.72	Very good	3.40	Very good
9. Have clean and pleasant appearances	3.56	Very good	3.55	Very good
10. Are willing to respond to customer requests anytime	3.46	Very good	3.36	Very good
11. Are willing to communicate with club members	3.75	Very good	3.68	Very good
12. Treat with courtesy	3.67	Very good	3.52	Very good
Weighted mean	3.45	Very good	3.36	Very good

2.4 Level of Satisfaction of Customers

Customer satisfaction was measured across quality of personnel, programs, and facilities (Table 5). The overall mean is 3.33 ("very satisfied"). For quality of personnel (mean = 3.35, very satisfied), the highest-rated item is "there are adequate professionals" (3.65), followed by satisfaction with professional competence (3.48) and friendliness (3.46). Items rated only "satisfied" include the performance of administrative staff (3.24) and the adequacy of medical personnel (3.05). Facilities received a mean of 3.38 ("very satisfied"). Most facility indicators were rated very satisfied, with the highest being good access to the center/club (3.55), adequate

exercise equipment (3.48), and ventilation (3.46). Only the proximity of the center/club to the customer's residence was rated merely "satisfied" (3.11). Programs received a mean of 3.24 ("satisfied"), with relatively lower ratings for pre-exercise program assessment (3.10) and informed consent forms (3.03). These findings indicate that customers evaluated personnel and facilities more favorably than program assessment procedures. Recent fitness-service research similarly emphasizes that servicescape, cleanliness, spatial layout, equipment maintenance, program quality, and customer experience quality are important determinants of perceived value, satisfaction, and loyalty [19,22-24].

Table 5 Customers' Level of Satisfaction

	Mean	Description
Customer Satisfaction Items		
Quality of Personnel	3.35	Very satisfied
1. There are adequate professionals (i.e. instructors, coaches) in this center/club.	3.65	Very satisfied
2. I am satisfied with the competence of the professionals in this center/club.	3.48	Very satisfied
3. I believe the professionals in this center/club possess relevant qualifications.	3.35	Very satisfied
4. The professionals are friendly to clients.	3.46	Very satisfied
5. There are adequate Medical Personnel in this center/club.	3.05	Satisfied
6. I am satisfied with the professional competence of the professionals in this center/club.	3.30	Very satisfied
7. There are adequate administrative staff in this center/club.	3.28	Very satisfied
8. I am satisfied with the performance of the administrative staff in this center/club.	3.24	Satisfied
Programs	3.24	Satisfied
9. I am satisfied with the pre-exercise program assessment in this center/club.	3.10	Satisfied
10. Clients are always given informed consent forms to fill before being accepted into exercise programs in this center/club.	3.03	Satisfied
11. I am always given adequate instructions before I am placed on exercise programs.	3.29	Very satisfied
12. Clients are placed on exercise programs based on their needs.	3.42	Very satisfied
13. I always experience too much pains and fatigue after my exercise programs. (N)	3.31	Very satisfied
14. I am satisfied with the exercise programs in this center/club.	3.28	Very satisfied
15. I am satisfied with the operative hours in this center/club.	3.32	Very satisfied
16. The exercise programs in this center/club are too expensive. (N)	3.20	Satisfied
Facilities	3.38	Very satisfied

17. There are good roads to this center/club.	3.55	Very satisfied
18. The location of this center/club is good.	3.42	Very satisfied
19. This center/club is sufficiently close to my residence.	3.11	Satisfied
20. There are adequate exercise equipment in this center/club.	3.48	Very satisfied
21. Most of the exercise equipment in this center/club are not out-dated.	3.36	Very satisfied
22. The exercise equipment in this center/club are safe for use by clients.	3.28	Very satisfied
23. This center/club is large enough to contain clients conveniently.	3.36	Very satisfied
24. This center/club is fitted with sufficient facilities for clients' comfort.	3.42	Very satisfied
25. This center/club is well ventilated.	3.46	Very satisfied
Weighted Mean	3.33	Very satisfied

2.5 Relationship between Variables

2.5.1 Relationship between Profile of Professionals and Level of Work Competence

Chi-square tests (Table 6) indicate no significant relationship between any professional profile variable and self-reported work competence ($p > 0.05$)

Table 6 Test of Correlations between Professionals' Profile and Level of Work Competence

Profile	Computed chi-square	Df	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Age	15.250	8	0.512	Accept null	No significant relationship
Sex	0.125	3	0.418	Accept null	No significant relationship
Civil status	14.310	6	0.362	Accept null	No significant relationship
Length of experience	13.333	8	0.368	Accept null	No significant relationship
Average monthly income	12.125	8	0.562	Accept null	No significant relationship

for age, sex, civil status, length of experience, and average monthly income). Thus, the professionals' favorable self-assessments are independent of their demographic characteristics. The relatively narrow range of required competency skills in fitness settings may contribute to this uniformly high self-rating.

2.5.2 Relationship between Profile of Customers and Level of Satisfaction

Similarly, chi-square tests (Table 7) reveal no significant relationship between customers' profile (age, sex, civil status, length of membership, average daily use) and their satisfaction level ($p > 0.05$).

Table 7 Test of Correlations between Customers' Profile and Level of Satisfaction

Profile	Computed chi-square	df	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Age	12.125	8	0.567	Accept null	No significant relationship
Sex	3.336	3	0.368	Accept null	No significant relationship
Civil status	4.256	6	0.562	Accept null	No significant relationship
Length of membership	16.325	8	0.124	Accept null	No significant relationship
Average daily use	15.213	8	0.324	Accept null	No significant relationship

Satisfaction ratings are consistently high regardless of profile. Perceived value and service reputation influence satisfaction, but the present data show that customer characteristics do not differentiate satisfaction scores.

2.5.3 Relationship between Work Competence and Level of Satisfaction

The Pearson correlation between customers' perception of work competence and their satisfaction level is 0.489 ($p = 0.037$), indicating a significant positive relationship (Table 8). The shared variance is approximately 24%. This result should be interpreted as an association rather than a causal effect because

Table 8 Test of Correlations between Level of Work Competence and Level of Satisfaction

Computed Pearson r	Shared variance	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
0.489	23.9%	0.037	Reject null	Significant relationship

2.6 Difference in Perceived Level of Work Competence between Professionals and Customers

An independent-samples t-test (Table 9) compared professionals' self-assessment (mean = 3.45) and

the study used a descriptive-correlational and cross-sectional design. Nevertheless, the finding is consistent with recent fitness service literature showing that service quality, instructor interaction quality, trust, and customer experience are closely linked with satisfaction and loyalty [2,3,6]. Higher perceived work competence was therefore associated with greater customer satisfaction in this sample.

customers' evaluation (mean = 3.36). The result ($t = 1.894$, $p = 0.063$) shows no significant difference, indicating that both groups similarly perceive work competence as very good.

Table 9 Test of Differences in Level of Work Competence

Group	Mean	Computed t	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Professionals	3.45	1.894	0.063	Accept null	No significant difference
Customers	3.36				

III. DISCUSSION

3.1 Interpretation of Findings

The results indicate that both professionals and customers evaluated work competence at a very good level, while customers reported an overall very satisfied level of satisfaction. These findings suggest that customer-contact professionals were generally perceived as competent and service-oriented. However, the comparatively lower scores on updated information, problem handling, scheduling support, pre-exercise assessment, informed consent, and complaint response reveal several managerial weaknesses. These weaknesses are important because contemporary fitness service research emphasizes that professional interaction, service responsiveness, program quality, and service environment jointly shape perceived value, trust, satisfaction, and loyalty [2,3,6,22-24].

The non-significant relationships between demographic profiles and work competence or satisfaction suggest that age, sex, civil status, membership length, experience, and income did not meaningfully differentiate the main outcomes in this

sample. This result may be related to the small and convenience-based sample, as well as the relatively homogeneous service context. By contrast, the significant positive relationship between customers' perceived work competence and satisfaction indicates that customers who perceived stronger professional competence also tended to report higher satisfaction. This finding reinforces the practical importance of professional training and service encounter quality in fitness centers.

3.2 Practical Implications

Fitness centers should strengthen professional development in four areas. First, staff training should move beyond technical instruction and include communication, customer interaction, complaint handling, and service recovery. Second, centers should improve service responsiveness by establishing clearer procedures for handling unexpected conditions and customer complaints. Third, programs should include more systematic pre-exercise assessment, informed consent, and individualized program matching. Fourth, managers should adopt a customer-centered service design approach, integrating personnel quality, facility

maintenance, equipment safety, service environment, and customer feedback into routine management.

3.3 Limitations and Future Research

This article is based on a legacy dataset originally collected for a 2013 doctoral dissertation. Therefore, the results should not be interpreted as evidence of the current status of the Cebu City fitness industry. The sample size was small, the sampling method was convenience-based, and the research design was cross-sectional and correlational. The reliability coefficient of the instrument was acceptable for exploratory field research but limited, and the findings rely partly on self-reported perceptions. Future studies should use larger and more representative samples, updated measurement tools, confirmatory factor analysis, and longitudinal or structural equation modeling designs to examine the relationships among professional competence, service quality, customer satisfaction, trust, and loyalty in contemporary fitness service settings.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study found that sports and fitness professionals' work competence and customers' satisfaction were both evaluated positively in the selected centers. Professionals' self-assessment and customers' evaluation of work competence did not differ significantly, suggesting a generally consistent perception between the two respondent groups. The profile characteristics of professionals and customers were not significantly related to the main outcomes. However, customers' perceived work competence was significantly and positively associated with customer satisfaction. These findings indicate that the professional competence of customer-contact staff remains a critical component of fitness service management. For practice, fitness centers should strengthen professional training, service response capacity, program assessment, informed consent procedures, and customer-centered service design. For research, the findings should be treated as a retrospective empirical basis for further studies using updated data and more rigorous measurement models.

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